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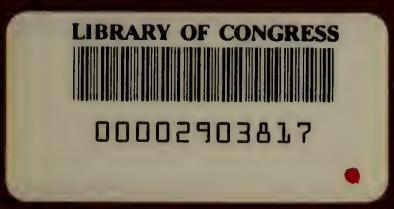

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WORCESTER POEMS

1915–1916

ERNEST VINTON BROWN

Author's Edition

Wilmot, N. H.
1916

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No 1

WORCESTER POEMS.

MY FRIEND AND I IN HEAVEN.

I, and it was not I in an earthly sense,
Rose on a flame unfelt, on a flame unseen,
Into a world I saw, with no human sight,
Peopled so densely, soul with each soul did touch,
In that fair universe to its utmost reach.

There did I know its people, not one by one,
As in the earth by sense we are known and know;
All did I know, at once, no extent nor bound,
Each of them here, and there, everywhere at once,
Weaving a pattern not as of finite threads;
Rather, each thread as each in its attributes—
Substance and color, spirit and features one,—
Yet could I call each one in that spirit world,
Knowing who answered, were it by word unspoke,
Having no use of speech, or for other toy
Used by the soul which lives in the fig-leaf garb.

There did I find my friend, but he used no name;
I would have asked him questions in multitude
Had he been here on earth, and so we had met,
But, in that flame, *I knew*, and the fact sufficed.

SOUL.

I asked not if his soul were white
Before the great adventure came,
I simply knew our souls were one
In tongues of iridescent flame.

The stars could not contain the light
That from his spirit leaped and sped,
Unlimited in form or sense,
Where dwell the souls the world calls dead.

I touched it everywhere in space—
If that be space where God doth dwell—
Yet touch is earthly, this was life
Of which no carnal tongue can tell.

Not his alone, that flame, nor mine;
We lived as many lives in one
As might have filled the universe
Wherein our earthly work is done.

Nor could we measure time nor space;
Vast ages were the seconds there;
An atom was some universe
Which trembled on the flaming air.

And God *was there*; I saw His form—
If that be form which is not form;
Where He dwelt, I dwelt, all one flame—
And He the everlasting Norm.

LIFE.

I search the terms of earthly sense
For measure of the life we knew,
When flamed our spirits thus with God—
They sum a single breath we drew.

As flood that overspreads the earth,
The light, which we were, flooded all—
So high there was no surface light,
So deep there was not depth to fall.

As carbon which the mystery fills
Will spring from darkness into sight,
And strike the eye to blinded state
Wherein it sees but blinding light,

So heaven fell about my soul,
Till touch, and taste, and sound, and sight,
Became as one; as rainbow hues
May blend till there is only white.

As part of all that glorious flame,
I knew not whether we had died
To reach celestial happiness;
But there my soul was *satisfied.*

LOVE.

Nor had we need of love, where love
Was all that had survived the earth;
We had no passion; love refined
Had lost all elements save worth.

And she who fettered love on earth,
With such a great unfettered love
It seemed there were no love beside,
I loved as purely there above.

I loved her not as wife or maid,
Within the thrall that held us there,
And yet, I never knew on earth
That one I loved could be so fair.

Our very thoughts were living flames
That leaped to one another's sense,
Nor words were needed, to express
How love had found its recompense.

That spirit mingled with mine own,
As rose-scent with the air of June,
And music of eternal spheres
Set every flaming soul attune.

If now the pain of earth were more,
Its sorrows boundless as the sky,
And all its bitterness were mine,
Redemption in such love would lie.

SIN.

Though sin no more drew bitter tears,
I knew about me those whose eyes
Had failed to see the stars, or God,
Or even to the hilltops rise.

They had not seen His glories speak
From cloud and rain, from fern and grass,
Nor learned the alphabet of grace
That lies in every way we pass.

Their hearts had never scanned the notes
That harmonize with heaven here,
Nor in their fellow men had found
The chord that draws that heaven near.

And there enwrapt in every flame,
They were as blind as though in night,
And groped and grasped, *unsatisfied*,
Throughout a wilderness of light.

There rang in us the vibrant strains,
Of heaven's joy and glad release,
While they heard discords in themselves
Which drowned the flaming song of peace.

They knew not what their souls had lost,
Yet hungered to be satisfied;
So shrunken was their every sense
That with each moment they re-died.

As fingers press the key and all
Is darkness, so the vision fled;
I woke to pain and loneliness,
And found the world itself was dead.

THE GREATER LOVE.

Last night I dreamed of you, and when I woke
  This morning there was heaven in my eyes,
For they still held the vision I had seen;
  As pleasant water in mirage oft lies
    Before the thirst-worn desert-faring man.
My friends with marvel saw the gleaming light
  Reflected from the casements of my soul,
And knew that I had walked some pleasant path,—
  But I could not reveal to them the whole,
    No more, I think, than God His heaven can.

Last night! It seems to me an age ago,
  Since I touched arm with you and saw the smile
Upon the petal texture of your face,
  As I walked by you for a little while;
    Though dream it might have been, to give it name.
So fair were you, so pure the love I felt,
  The pain of life, and what it holds of ill,
Were felt no more than when the ether thralls;—
  But love had mastery above my will
    And left it dream, while I rejoice it came.

SEEING GOD.

If I had seen that leaf unfold,
Which first in Eden's garden grew,
The face of God I would have seen,
For He and leaf and branch were one.

But now I see unfolding leaves
With eyes so dimmed by worldly things,
I see not Him but sun and rain,
And do not understand their power.

Yet oft repeated miracle
Becomes again the Living Form,
As in the bush God speaks to me,—
And I behold Him face to face.

Nor is that bush consumed by flame
Or radiance of the One I see,
As from each bud the Voice I hear
Proclaims that here is holy ground.

GOD'S GOLD.

God scatters His gold with a lavish hand,
O'er meadow, and field, and the pasture land;
And even the hills show its glitt'ring tawn,
Beneath the swift touch of the frost king's wand.
Unless by restraint of a brother's hand,
No child is so poor that he cannot have
Such wealth as no Crœsus could lordly own;
No child is so rich but this wealth adds more
To all of the treasures he has in store;—
And freely it lies in the whole of outdoor.

There daffodil, daisy, and lily nod,
With buttercup, cowslip, and goldenrod;
There dandelions cover the springing sod,
There violets hide, and the roses lift,
And hazel blooms—Indian Summer's gift,
Reminding our hearts of the wondrous rod,
That budded and bloomed where the Nile sands drift—
And earth is wide-strewn with the wealth of God,
For butterfly, bee, or a little boy,
Who toddles his way to a paradise
Of flowers, of laughter, and rippling joy.

YULETIME.

Once more do we mark by the Yule-log's glow,
By hanging of holly and mistletoe,
The passing of days, and the growth of years,
With their gathered joys, and their scattered tears.

Once more do we listen to children's mirth,
That came to the world with a Saviour's birth;
While womanhood bowing the cradle above,
Ne'er more is a slave, through the freedom of love.

Once more the bells ring, and the angels sing;
On tremulous nature the tidings wing,
From gift-laden boughs of the scented fir,
Remembrance of frankincense, gold and myrrh.

Once more the skies open to heavens beyond,
As they to the Bethlehem shepherds dawned;
While simple and wise at the Christ-Child's feet,
In faith's adoration will lovingly meet.

MEDICINE WATER.

In an exhibition of paintings by "men who paint the West," given at the Worcester Art Museum in March, 1916, was shown one by E. Irving Couse of New York City, having the above title. An Indian clad only in breech cloth and sandals stands on a fragment of rock resting in a pool of water at the base of an overhanging cliff. He is reaching out his hand in the act of catching a tiny stream of water falling from the cliff into the pool. Beyond the Indian's figure is the dim mouth of a cavern which adds a vague sense of mystery and depth with its blended shadows. The poise of the Indian is eager and expectant, while his face has an expression of mystical aspiration. The colors harmonize with the mysticism of the picture. The following poem was sent the Museum to forward to the artist and the museum authorities sent a copy to the Worcester Post which published it March 14, 1916.

He knows not Greece nor Rome;
Egypt and Babylon are not names to him;
The rock beside him, hardly pierced
By titan nature, is his world's rim.

Naked, save for a shred that binds his loins,
Poised on a pebble in a tiny pool, he stands,
Reaching his soul in eye and arm,
To catch the trickle of the Infinite's commands.

The cavern's mouth conceals the mountain depths;
And in his mystic's eye we see no more;
Nature and God, alike to him, are one
To see, to learn, and learning, to adore.

THE CITY.

This is the City—Wood, Stone, Brick,—
Piled in jagged shape and stark form,
Tearing the sky as the rocks
Tear the swift fall of a stream.

Sweat-mists arising—dusk, grey, thick—
Clouding the morn with their steam,
Show where the groanings of men
Drown in machinery's moan.

Here is the mingling—Faith, Blood, Creed—
Graving of adamant souls,
Held in the currents of life,
Passion, endeavor and need.

Here the Great Spoiler—Chance, Fate, Greed—
Draws to himself in his net,
Souls of the eddying deep,
Striving for that which will feed.

This is the City—Work, Hope, Prayer—
Holding the tints of the sky,
Taking the glint of the sun,
Passionate, stark, yet fair.

MOTHER.

Her day begins with service,
In humble tasks, preparing
The food we're daily needing;
In heat, in cold, she's helping
The God who daily feeds us.

She polishes the kettles,
She gives the floors a sweeping,
Makes everything ashining;
And God, I think, is keeping
For her His richest mansion.

She takes the ragged clothing
And makes it almost perfect;
Her patient hands are knitting
Not merely earthly raiment,
But that she'll wear in heaven.

The children's tears relieving,
With multitude of carings,
The house is freed of sorrow;
And when she gets to heaven,
Will God not have her help Him?

TO A PARTRIDGE.

The love note of your mate's strong wing
Has died upon the cool spring air,
Where drove the mists of melting snow
Which left the nesting hummock bare.

Ere yet the springing buds are leaf,
Ere yet the white-winged flowers bloom,
The nest is hollowed mid the leaves
Within a sapling's spacious room.

To that first love, which sped your flight,
Is added love which fills the breast
With such bold shyness as to hold
You steadfast on the egg-filled nest.

Reluctantly, when danger threats,
You leave your speckled treasures there,
And wing retreat with heavy stroke
Away from all you count so fair.

Then, when the ruder footsteps pass,
You hasten dawning life to warm,
Love deepening in maternity
Before it wakes to its new form.

Some day the shell will ope to sight,
Be cast aside, a worthless thing;
And all your world of sun and bud
The mother love repeat and sing.

And yet, alarms will come, you know,
Despite the gladness in life's youth;
So you will teach your little ones
Beneath dead leaves to hide the truth.

Across my pathway flutters then
A ruffled ball, distressed, which grieves,
To tempt me by deceit away
From those loved heads beneath the leaves.

Then soon the roaming fever'll come,
And countless leafy closets give
Their stores of buds and tender mast,
On which these larger lives shall live.

No longer will they turn and hide,
These children of the woodland glade,
But seek new solitudes, on wings
Whose browns blend with the forest shade.

The cycle runs again complete,
When these young wings drum forth the call
Resistless to some bright-eyed mate,
Ere next the apple blossoms fall.

And rude is he who would despoil
The happiness, a springtime brings
To your loved nest beneath the trees,
And life's sweet hope beneath your wings.

April 25, 1916.

WITH THE CHRIST.

Dost Thou ask, O Lord, of me,
That I go a mile with Thee?
Gladly will I go the twain.

Can I stand the wilderness,
With its hunger, bitterness?
Firmly will I taste its pain.

Can I mid the scornful walk,
With the very sinful talk?
This, if I can witness Thee.

Will I lose my hope of gain,
Riches, power, all disdain?
Sacrifice is sweet, with Thee.

Can I pass the olive press,
Love Thee more, instead of less?
Dear to me, Gethsemane.

Can I sheathe my sword in peace,
Cease to strive for Thy release?
Lord, I hesitate, but go.

Will I lower Thee from the cross,
Shroud Thee with my tears of loss?
That is less than Thou for me.

Can I pierce the graven gloom,
Seek Thee in the new-made tomb?
Still my soul must follow Thee.

Step by step Thy way has led,
Till my heart is with the dead.
Roll away the stone, I pray.

Will I meet Thee by the sea,
Feed the lambs, and love but Thee?
I would never more deny.

Can I patient see Thee rise,
Wait until Thou dost baptise?
In the upper room I stay.

Quicken then the Soul's re-birth,
From the passions of the earth.
That I rise with Thee today.

ADDED VERSE.

OLD HOME DAY
1916

A RACE OF MEN.

This poem was read at the Wilmot Old Home day observance August 23, 1916, on the grounds of the Wilmot Campmeeting Association, almost at the foot of Kearsarge Mountain and close to that principal branch of the Blackwater River which is the outlet of Pleasant Lake in New London and flows across the southern part of Wilmot through the village of Wilmot Flat. The town of Wilmot is tripartite, composed as it is of portions which were formerly parts of New London, Kearsarge Gore and New Chester, now Hill. In the division of Kearsarge Gore the line was run from Sutton line over the highest ridges and summit of the mountain to the southwest corner of Andover. Later, the remainder of Kearsarge Gore was joined to Warner. In the New London portion of Wilmot, once granted Alexandria as Alexandria Addition, is Old England a mountain with rocky precipitous sides dominating that part of the town. Legend has it that it was bought in the early years of the town's settlement by a man from England, hence its name. The portion of New Chester annexed brought Ragged Mountain within the town limits. Besides the Branch Brook in the southern part of the town, two other branches of the Blackwater flow across the town. Both rise in the edge of Springfield, one flowing parallel with the Fourth New Hampshire Turnpike Road through Wilmot Center and joining the Blackwater in Andover. while the other, outlet of Piper or Moody pond, later joined by the waters of Whites pond, flows across the upper part of Wilmot and through Danbury into Eagle Pond, which lying beside

the northern Railroad, is in the New Chester part of Wilmot. The mountain "peeping through yon boughs" is Kearsarge, in plain view from the camp ground. The valley of Branch or Great Brook is comparatively level and from this the village of Wilmot Flat obtains its name but this emphasis upon the physical character of a valley scarce half a mile wide shows the correctness of speaking of "these vales so scant."

The mountain spoke to the wilderness, "Bring forth
a race of men!"
And the hunter sprang lithe-footed out of the forests'
loins.
A branch he snatched from the hemlock, stretched a
strand from end to end,
With a flint he shaped a sapling into an arrow
straight.
Then deep he plunged in the mother wood to learn her
secret lore,
Like a child he drank her pleasures, quaffed of her
waters sweet.
The bear he tracked with caution yielded him strength
and robe,
And the deer he followed with stillness furnished
him tent and meat.
He strode the brook to the river, rode the river to the
sea
In a vessel made of bark he stripped from the
birchen wood.

His foot was light on the meadows where it pressed
the leafy mold,
And his face was bronze in sun, and dark where the
forests stood.
The waters ran in their channels, beavers' dams their
only bar,
While the forests grew and rotted, making the
earth grow fat;
But they who hunted the hillsides o'er increased no
more in mind,
For the race of men came not from children the
forest gat.

Again the call of the mountain rang, "Bring forth a
race of men!"
And the sea which heard the call brought over its
children then.
It cast them, lonely and longing, where wood and rock
were waste,
But they made the stone their hammer, beating
their onward way;
They made the wood into hut and house, rude shelters
from the sun,
As they ploughed the fallow soil and waited the
harvest day.

They harnessed river and brook to wheels to grind
their simple food,
While their cattle fed in pastures cleared from the
forest shade.
In sweat and weariness though they toiled, their eyes
beheld a goal,
And they grew in stature daily, till newly the earth
was made;
And over it they established law, the law that men
are free;
For the mountain called for men, and mountains,
are they not free?
The freedom ocean had given, too; its tumult, depth
and peace;
And to them it was their own, and what is more free
than sea?
The call that came from the mountain heights brought
forth a race of men,
When our fathers tamed these hillsides, for—*there
were giants then.*

Today the mountains are calling us, "Bring forth a
race of men!"
For the wilderness is creeping, back where it was
before;

The chains the rivers were harnessed with, no longer
hold our streams,
And the toil we give to distant plains, if it ploughed
our hills,
Would furnish food for a mighty race, of our own
strong breed;
While the song of wheels might sing, again on these
rippling rills.
The hunter gone to a hunting ground, beyond the
Unknown Stream,
And the ones who crossed another Sea—left their
message here.
Again the mountains are calling us, "Bring forth a
race of men!"
As we hear Kearsarge and Ragged, speaking as
grandeur speaks;
Old England echoes the call they give, and clustered
hills repeat
From the cliffs and scant-clothed pastures, crowning
their rugged peaks.
The smile we see on that stalwart mountain, peeping
through yon boughs,
And the smile of pleasant river—Blackwater,
though it be—
Was that which drew, to these vales so scant, the
race which crossed a sea,
Which has left its blood in us—the blood of *A Race
of Men*.

LITTLE TOT.

Yesterday she came to meet me, just a little tot,
Hair a rimpling down her shoulders—frame for smiling face—
While her feet were dancing swiftly, on the tufted green,
In the way that children joyously with sunbeams race.

Yesterday at noon she came demurely to the gate,
Put her arm about my shoulder, chimed her step with mine;
And the sun cast little shadows as we paced the path,
While I wished the sun might never cross the medial line.

Yesterday at evening, ere the sun was hid by hills,
She was waiting as a princess once a fairy elf;
In her voice was purl of waters, song of all that sings,
While the orb behind her was no fairer than herself.

Later as delaying moon came peeping out of east,
Someone else was greeted gaily, two of them the world forgot,
In a joy that dawns as roses blossom for the sun,
And I quickly knew that I had lost *my* little tot.

October 10, 1916.

I LOVE YOU.

The pines had bowed their heads to listen, the clouds
were ling'ring near,
The birds had stilled their bowered choir, that they
might also hear,
The insects in the browning grass were strumming on
their lyre,
And lazy fish were hid below the cardinal blossoms'
fire.
The bees forgot to gather sweets from flowers' hearts
that day,
The ants were winging in the air their joyous wedding
way,
The cattle browsed within the run, their udders full of
milk,
While by the path a spider spun his glist'ning tent of
silk.
The tasselled corn swayed to and fro upon the smiling
breeze,
The ferns in whisperings re-sang the music of the trees,
And purple asters shone like stars in firmament of blue,
Beside the road which led me to the world of "I love
you."

October 12, 1916.

THE PAGAN'S CRY.

Jerusalem! Jesrusalem! To many gods I pray,
Yet in my direst need I find that they are gods of clay;
I sought their temples in despair, to ask life's wisest way,
But learned no wisdom at their feet, though seeking day by day.

Refrain:
Jerusalem! Jerusalem! I worship gods of clay,
Who give no answer to my prayer though sped by bitter tear.
Jerusalem! Jerusalem! Hast Thou a better Way,
Give me an answer to my need and I will gladly hear.

Jerusalem! Jerusalem! I bruise my flesh and bleed
To win the favor of my gods and they give me no heed;
Their eyes are stone, their ears are brass, they do not feel my pain;
Hast Thou a hearing, seeing God, whose presence I can gain?

Jerusalem! Jerusalem! My gods my soul oppress,
My heart and brow drip sweat and tears in pain and bitterness,
Because my gods are senseless things, while I a spirit feel;
And if Thou hast a living God, to Him I would appeal.

Jerusalem! Jerusalem! I gave to priest and god,
I held no treasure from their hands, though I to earth was trod,
Till life is misery and pain, despair and mingled grief,
But I have heard, from distant lands, Thy God will give relief.

Jerusalem! Jerusalem! O, teach me how to pray!
That I may have Thy God for mine and learn that Better Way.
My riches I have given gods who give me naught in need;
Yet will I come with hungered soul and ask Thy God to heed.

October 23, 1916.

MARY THE CARPENTER'S WIFE.

Mother of God? Ah, no!
She was Mary the carpenter's wife,
Tall and dark, but withal most fair;
Neighbor, friend, in the village there,
Known as Mary to youth and maid,
Welcomed, when at the well she waits;
Kindly listens, as one relates
What engages a woman's breath,
Latest gossip of Nazareth.

Queen of Heaven? No.
Joseph married the village queen,
Throned her there in his humble house,
There she ruled as a loving spouse,
Known as Mary to child and age,
Bearing burdens of water, wood,
Doing all that a woman could,
And, a mother, she bore a Son!
All the ages so women have done.

Mother of God? Ah, no!
Jesus, Child in the streets was He,
Knew the paths on each circling hill,
Loving Mother as children will;
She was Mary to God and men,
Thus she taught as all mothers may,
How to love, and the way to pray;
There He grew to His larger life,
Loving Mary the carpenter's wife.

November 1, 1916.

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